



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

News Release

March 8, 2005

LEBANESE NATIONAL CHARGED IN FRAUDULENT DOCUMENT SCHEME

LOS ANGELES – A Lebanese national made his initial appearance in federal court here late yesterday to face charges after he attempted to mail fraudulent immigration documents and Social Security cards to Lebanon to help two male acquaintances enter the United States illegally.

Agents with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Social Security Administration (SSA) arrested Maher Hamdan Abbouchi, 26, Friday at his Diamond Bar home following an 18-month investigation. The probe began after a parcel Abbouchi sent to Lebanon was intercepted by U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers at a mail processing center in Louisville, Kentucky. Inside, CBP officers found two fraudulent permanent resident or “green cards” and two fake Social Security cards. The ensuing investigation was conducted jointly by special agents with ICE and the SSA.

ICE agents say the package Abbouchi mailed contained a letter directing the recipient to take the false documents to the Mexican embassy in Beirut and use them to obtain tourist visas to Mexico. Once the recipients arrived in Mexico, Abbouchi stated he would pick up the individuals and bring them to the United States illegally.

“The Department of Homeland Security is working aggressively to address potential vulnerabilities in our nation’s immigration system that could be exploited by those bent on doing us harm,” said Louis Rodi III, the assistant special agent-in-charge who oversees ICE’s national security unit in Los Angeles. “There is no evidence that anyone linked to this investigation had ties to terrorism, but this is another demonstration of the vigilance and cooperation that are crucial to ensuring our national security.”

Abbouchi was indicted by a federal grand jury on four counts of transferring false identification documents and one count of making false statements. If convicted of all the counts against him, he faces a maximum sentence of 65 years in prison. Abbouchi’s arraignment is set for March 14. He is being held on \$75,000 bond.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.